

VZCZCXYZ0026
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHGB #0507/01 0561526
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 251526Z FEB 10
FM AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6835
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNIRA/IRAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L BAGHDAD 000507

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR NEA/FO CORBIN AND NEA/I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/24/2020
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CVIS](#) [IR](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: MEK/ASHRAF: GOI PLANS TO RELOCATE MEK ON HOLD FOR
FORESEEABLE FUTURE

REF: A. BAGHDAD 264
[1](#)B. 09 BAGHDAD 3236 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Acting Political M/C Yuri Kim for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: During a February 24 meeting with Emboffs and USF-I officials, the Chairman of the GOI's Ashraf Committee responsible for the Mujahideen-e-Khalq (MeK) stated the following: (1) The GOI has no plans to move the MeK for the foreseeable future given the national elections and the lack of a viable alternative site to Ashraf; (2) the GOI is seeking UNAMI assistance to resolve the impasse between the MeK and Iranian families demanding visitation with relatives in Ashraf; (3) an Iraqi court has issued warrants for MeK officials suspected of holding residents hostage; (4) the GOI has concluded a comprehensive investigation of the July clashes and is prepared to present its findings to the EU in Brussels; and (5) humanitarian and medical supplies are being delivered regularly and without interruption to Ashraf. END SUMMARY.

Everything On Hold For Now

[1](#)2. (C) On February 24, Ali al-Yassery, Chairman of the GOI's Ashraf Committee (and PM Maliki's cousin/troubleshooter-at-large), informed Post's Iran watchers (Emboffs) and Major Generals David Quantock and Nelson Cannon of U.S. Forces Iraq (USF-I) that the GOI would like to "keep things quiet" with the MeK in Ashraf and would revisit its relocation plan after the elections to determine the appropriate course of action. The GOI would only seek to relocate the residents if/when a viable alternative site to Ashraf has been identified, Yassery noted. (NOTE: Human Rights Minister Wijdan Selim told Emboffs separately that the MOHR plans to visit Ashraf and interview residents individually to determine their wishes regarding relocation and potential refugee resettlement. She stated that these interviews would likely take place before July. END NOTE.)

[1](#)3. (C) According to Yassery, the proposed relocation site (Camp Samawa) in Muthanna province was not feasible given the camp's poor condition, prompting the GOI to reconsider Camp Echo in Diwaniyah province (currently a U.S. FOB/PRT). He added that the GOI would have no choice but to wait until Echo's official transfer in 2011 or identify another facility suitable for 3,400 residents. (NOTE: The GOI seems less enthusiastic about its original plan to temporarily house MeK residents in Baghdad hotels. The January bombings targeting two local hotels, including one adjacent to the hotel housing MeK defectors, may have dampened the GOI's enthusiasm. END NOTE.)

Visiting Hours Are Over

¶4. (C) Yassery also explained that over the past several days, family members of MeK residents have arrived from Iran demanding visitation rights with their relatives in Ashraf. Most of the nearly two dozen visiting family members have staged sit-ins and protests outside Ashraf's main entrance (Lions Gate), refusing to return to Iran until they meet with their relatives. UNAMI continues to mediate between the MeK and GOI with the hopes of identifying a mutually acceptable compromise, including a "neutral" meeting site for family visitation.

¶5. (C) The MeK representatives insist that visits be conducted at their facility in Ashraf, while also claiming that the relatives in Ashraf do not wish to see their visiting family members. (NOTE: It is not uncommon for MeK leaders to discourage and intimidate their followers from Qleaders to discourage and intimidate their followers from meeting relatives. END NOTE.) The Iraqi authorities want the visits held in a GOI facility in Ashraf, citing fears of clashes between the MeK and the visitors if the two sides meet under MeK auspices. Yassery exclaimed that "these Iranians (relatives) are causing us problems" and refuse to leave. He has asked UNAMI to use its office space at FOB Grizzly as the proposed neutral ground for private meetings between the family members, without GOI or MeK officials present. In the meantime, the impasse continues to play out, loudly but without violence, outside Lions Gate as Iraqi security forces serve as a buffer between the heckling MeK and visiting family members.

¶6. (C) According to Yassery, some of the relatives are seeking legal recourse and have filed complaints with Iraqi authorities alleging that their family members in Ashraf are being held against their will by the MeK, thereby qualifying as hostages under Iraqi law. Yassery's legal adviser, Ali Haqi, said that an Iraqi judge has issued three arrest warrants against MeK members and other warrants may be forthcoming unless the MeK accommodate the family visits. Yassery acknowledged the likelihood of violent clashes if warrants are served. At the urging of USG officials, he agreed to allow the UN more time to resolve the visitation impasse peacefully before pursuing legal action.

Brussels Here We Come

¶7. (C) Emboffs inquired about GOI efforts to investigate the July clashes with the MeK that resulted in the death of 11 Ashraf residents and the detention of 36 others. Emboffs pointed to a Spanish judge's pending inquiry into the incident that could result in the prosecution of a senior GOI security official (ref A). Yassery confirmed that a comprehensive GOI interagency investigation was conducted at his office's behest and in coordination with the Ministry of Human Rights.

¶8. (C) Yassery noted that Human Rights Minister Wijdan presented the GOI's findings at the UN's human rights conference in Geneva. He also underscored the GOI's keen interest in briefing its findings to the EU in Brussels, stating "We have our visas and are just waiting for the EU to invite us."

MeK Defectors

¶9. (C) Yassery confirmed that there are 12 MeK defectors (10 male, 2 female) housed in a Baghdad hotel. ICRC informed Post that 11 of the defectors have requested voluntary repatriation to Iran and will be processed in the coming weeks. (NOTE: The GOI recently transferred the defectors to a new hotel because the previous hotel sustained damages from a bombing in January targeting hotels frequented by Western journalists. END NOTE.)

¶10. (C) One of the recent arrivals is a female defector, Firouzan Taghizadeh Alamdari (DOB: 03/22/57), who initially

claimed to be a U.S. legal permanent resident. Firouzan's Amcit mother has filed an immigrant visa petition for her that is pending with the National Visa Center. Yassery quipped that the USG should take Firouzan into custody and send her to her mother in the U.S. Emboffs clarified that Firouzan would have to be deemed eligible for an immigrant visa before she could travel to the United States. (NOTE: ICRC forwarded to Post an email from Firouzan's U.S.-based attorney, Glen M. Krebs, seeking ICRC assistance for her in Iraq and encouraging her to seek refuge at the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. END NOTE.)

¶11. (C) Yassery confirmed that Firouzan was examined by a doctor and met with UN officers this week. She has apparently agreed to remain in Baghdad for the time being. Emboffs underscored the importance of regular and unfettered access to medical care for her and other MeK defectors to ensure their well-being.

Supplies Getting In

¶12. (C) Yassery rejected recent MeK public claims that the GOI was blocking the delivery of humanitarian, medical, and fuel supplies. He clarified that the GOI objected to gasoline deliveries given the MeK's proven efficiency with Molotov cocktails during the July clashes. To drive home his point, Yassery said that an Iraqi police officer, injured in the July clashes, remains in a coma, while another has been paralyzed. At USF-I's urging, Yassery reluctantly agreed to allow the delivery of a small quantity of gasoline to address the MeK's non-Molotov needs.

HILL